TL 249

11 July [redacted] 1984.

A.L.P.

NOTES FOR SPEECH TO NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TIMOR QUESTION

COMRADES, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT THERE IS A SENSE OF GRIM URGENCY ABOUT THE FIVE MINUTES I'VE BEEN ALLOCATED.

IT'S NOT JUST THAT OUR RESOLUTIONS MAY HAVE A CRITICAL BEARING ON THE FUTURE OF THE EAST TIMORESE, IT'S ALSO VERY MUCH ABOUT WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY STANDS FOR, ABOUT WHETHER IT'S GOING TO SINK IN THE QUAGMIRE OF ITS LEADERS FEARS AND PREJUDICES, OR WHETHER WE HAVE THE INNATE STRENGTH IN GOVERNMENT TO STAND UP FOR WHAT WE CLAIMED WE BELIEVED IN WHEN WE WERE IN OPPOSITION.

HAVE WE ABANDONED OUR PROUD CLAIM OF THE PAST TO BE THE LEADING VOICE OF THE CONSCIENCE OF THE PROGRESSIVE MINDED? HAS OUR ROLE BEEN BURIED IN WHAT ONE OBSERVER (JIM DUNN) CALLS SUBJECTIVE PRAGMATISM? DO WE BURY PROBLEMS, RATHER THAN FACE UP TO THEM, OR RESOLVE THEM ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO ESPOUSE?

TO TURN TO THE ISSUE ITSELF, I PROPOSE TO CONCENTRATE ON TWO ASPECTS OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE. FIRSTLY, I PROPOSE TO DISPEL THE MANY MYTHS THAT HAVE BEEN NURTURED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN EAST TIMOR. SECONDLY I SHALL TALK ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS CONFERENCE FOR THE TIMOR ISSUE AND ESPECIALLY FOR THE EAST TIMORESE PEOPLE WHOSE RIGHTS AND ASPIRATIONS SHOULD BE THE MAIN FOCUS OF OUR ATTENTION.

IT IS CLEARLY NOT TRUE THAT OPPOSITION TO INDONESIAN RULE IS CONFINED TO A FEW DISSIDENT FRETILIN GUERILLAS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS.

THE ARMED RESISTANCE IS OBVIOUSLY THE TIP OF A GIGANTIC ICEBERG OF DISCONTENT AND OPPOSITION TO INTEGRATION. TO SUGGEST THAT THE RESISTANCE IS FUELLED BY THE OCCASIONAL EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN HERE IN AUSTRALIA, IS A FALSE ASSUMPTION. THE FEW EXPRESSIONS OF MORAL SUPPORT FROM AUSTRALIA DURING THE PAST NINE YEARS, HAVE NEVER LED TO ANY CHANGE IN FRETILIN'S SITUATION. THE REAL STIMULUS OF TIMORESE ARMED RESISTANCE HAS BEEN THE HARSH AND INSENSITIVE INDONESIAN OCCUPATION.

BUT THERE IS A MORE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION.

FAR FROM PROLONGING THE WAR, A POSITIVE INITIATIVE BY AUSTRALIA MIGHT CONCEIVABLY HAVE THE OPPOSITE RESULT, THAT IS TO SAY, IT MIGHT OPEN THE WAY TO A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, WITHOUT SUCH AN INITIATIVE THE FIGHTING AND REPRESSION COULD CONTINUE FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

THEN THERE IS THE MYTH THAT WE NEED TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE ANNEXATION OF EAST TIMOR IN ORDER TO HELP THE TIMORESE, AND THE FACILITATE THE ENTRY OF BADLY NEEDED HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. NO DOUBT THE TIMORESE NEED THIS KIND OF MATERIAL ASSISTANCE, BUT WE MUST NEVER FORGET, THAT THEIR MAIN HUMANITARIAN NEED IS TO BE FREED OF THEIR NEO-COLONIAL STATUS, AND TO EXPRESS FREELY THEIR OWN VIEWS ABOUT THE FUTURE.

ANOTHER MYTH IS THAT AS THE INDONESIAN WILL GO NO GROUND, IT WOULD BE FUTILE TO RAISE THE ISSUE FURTHER. BUT IS THIS SO?

JAKARTA'S SENSITIVITY TO THE VIEWS OF THE ALP, MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE SUHARTO REGIME IS MOST ANXIOUS NOT TO HAVE TO FACE INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE FOR A REVIEW OF ITS POSITION IN EAST TIMOR. IN REALITY THE POSITION OF INDONESIA, WHICH RELIES HEAVILY ON EXTERNAL AID, AND WHICH IS HEAVILY IN INTERNATIONAL DEBT, IS FAR FROM INVULNERABLE. AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND THAT INDONESIA HAS NOT SO FAR HAD TO FACE SERIOUS INTERNATIONAL DEMANDS ON THE SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN EAST TIMOR.

ON THE QUESTION OF POSSIBLE SANCTIONS, I BELIEVE THAT A KIND OF MYTHOLOGY HAS BEEN DELIBERATELY AND CYNICALLY BUILT UP. ANY SANCTIONS IMPOSED BY INDONESIA WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY EXPOSE THAT COUNTRY TO THE RISK OF RETALIATION WHICH WOULD CARRY POTENTIALLY MORE SERIOUS AND ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR INDONESIA THAN FOR AUSTRALIA.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF ALL THIS FOR AUSTRALIA? IN THE FIRST PLACE THE EAST TIMOR STORY IS A TALE OF SHAME AND HUMILIATION THAT THE ALP MUST FACE UP TO, AND ON THAT BASIS WE HAVE A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY, EVEN AT THIS LATE HOUR, NOT TO ABANDON THE TIMORESE TO A NEO-COLONIAL FATE.

THERE IS ONE VITALLY IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION WHICH THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE MUST FACE, AND THAT IS, THAT OUR RESOLUTIONS SHOULD REFLECT THE CONCERN OF THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

ALTHOUGH JAKARTA AND SOME OF OUR LESS RESPONSIBLE PRESS WOULD HAVE IT THAT ONLY THE LEFT FACTION OF THE PARTY IS PREPARED TO CONFRONT INDONESIA OVER HER HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN EAST TIMOR, THE TRUTH IS THAT THIS VIEW IS HELD NOT ONLY IN ALL SECTIONS OF THE PARTY BUT RIGHT ACROSS THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FABRIC OF THIS COUNTRY. THEREFORE WHAT WE SHOULD BE PUTTING ON THE RECORD TODAY IS A CLEAR REFLECTION OF THE AFFRONTED AUSTRALIAN CONSCIENCE.

LET US DO SOMETHING TO ATONE FOR OUR PAST HYPOCRISY, OUR CONVENIENT AND CYNICAL NEGLECT OF THOSE PRINCIPLES WE SO LOUDLY PROCLAIM IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES. LET THIS CONFERENCE NEVER FORGET THAT IT WAS A LABOR GOVERNMENT'S ACCOMMODATING ATTITUDES IN 1975 THAT ENCOURAGED THE INDONESIANS IN THE BELIEF THAT THEY COULD INTEGRATE EAST TIMOR IN THE FIRST PLACE.

WE NOW HAVE A GRAVE RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE US. WHAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CENTRE WANT US TO DO BY AVOIDING A POSITION ON SELF-DETERMINATION IS TO VIRTUALLY ENDORSE THE BRUTAL RAPE OF THAT COUNTRY, IN EFFECT TO PUT ANOTHER NAIL IN THE MASSIVE COFFIN WITH MORE THAN 100,000 TIMORESE VICTIMS OF INDONESIA'S AGRESSION. AND ALL THIS FOR THE SAKE OF APPEASING THE AGRESSORS IN JAKARTA!! BUT WE MUST ASK OURSELVES WHERE IS THIS WEAK ACT OF ACCOMMODATION TAKING US?

BILL HAYDEN WILL NO DOUBT BE ACCORDED A GRATEFUL WELCOME IN JAKARTA, BUT WHERE DO WE REALLY STAND IN THE EYES OF THOSE GENERALS, WHO IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD HAVE FACED CHARGES OF WAR CRIMES?

SUCH PEOPLE RESPECT STRENGTH, COURAGE AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE. BUT THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY WILL APPEAR IN THEIR EYES WEAK AND VACCILLATING IN ITS RESOLVE, STRONG ON THE RHETORIC OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES, BUT WEAK IN ITS ACTIONS WHICH SHOW A LACK OF COMMITMENT AND DETERMINATION.

WHAT I WANT TO PUT TO THE CONFERENCE IS, THAT ALTHOUGH A FIRM EXPRESSION OF HOW WE FEEL WILL NOT BE WELCOMED BY THE SUHARTO REGIME, IN THE LONGER TERM IT WILL WIN US THAT RESPECT WE'VE SACRIFICED IN RECENT YEARS, AND WHICH IS SO IMPORTANT IN THE CONDUCT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN STATES.

BILL HAYDEN SPEAKS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A DIALOGUE WITH JAKARTA, BUT WHAT USE IS THIS DIALOGUE IF IT IS BASED ON AN ACCOMMODATION BY THE LABOR GOVERNMENT OF ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS TO HAVE OCCURRED SINCE THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR? LET US MAKE OUR RESOLUTIONS HUMANITARIAN, POSITIVE AND PURPOSEFUL.

I APPEAL TO THE DELEGATES, THIS IS NOT A MATTER OF LEFT OR RIGHT POLITICS - IT IS A MATTER OF RIGHT OR WRONG - IT IS NOT A MATTER OF PRAGMATISM OR EXPEDIENCY - IT IS A MATTER OF DIGNITY AND CONSCIENCE.

IRRESPECTIVE OF WHAT ANYONE ASSERTS, THE BOTTOM LINE MUST BE TO RECOGNISE THE FACT THAT THE EAST TIMORESE PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION.

WE DON'T GRANT THEM THAT - THEY ARE FULLY ENTITLED TO IT AND WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO SAY SO.

ABOVE ALL LET NOT THIS CONFERENCE BE REQUIEM FOR THE BASIC RIGHTS OF THE EAST TIMORESE PEOPLE.

SENATOR G. McINTOSH.